

## **GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS**

These guidelines should be used as a checklist by agencies to ensure that sponsors receive adequate and timely information on all important matters. The guidelines should improve the quality and efficiency of preparing requests.

The guidelines are stated in general terms because requesters must tailor each request for a proposal so as to clearly reflect their specific needs or requirements. Accordingly, these guidelines are not mandatory. They are illustrations which may be modified or eliminated as appropriate.

### **LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**

An RFP package should include a cover letter which identifies:

1. Name and address of contact person;
2. Due date, **time and location** for responses;
3. Notification of any scheduled bidders' conference, including location, date and time, and stating whether attendance is a condition of selection;
4. Any other special requirements of the RFP process, such as a checklist for bidders.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The RFP itself should explain its purpose and the nature of the services that are sought.

Example: The purpose of this request is to obtain from independent management consulting firms proposals to perform a management study of the Division of External Obfuscation.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION**

The RFP should explain the process and minimum requirements for submission of proposals.

Example: The proposal must be **received** no later than January 1, 1991, **by:**  
John Doe  
Executive Assistant  
Division of Prolix Bulletins  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

The Division reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. The proposals will be evaluated by the staff of the Division. If a firm is selected, representatives will be invited to negotiate a contract.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

The RFP should provide needed general information, such as the type of government unit, its statutory authority, budget size, number of employees, and population served. For any associated governmental units, explain their involvement or relationship to the organization. Briefly explain the mission or purpose of the organization. It is usually efficient to supply information from existing documents as an attachment to the RFP. Also describe any recent published documents which may contribute to the scope of services, such as financial audits, program reviews or technical studies.

Example: The Division was created by the Vermont General Assembly in 1980. The authority of the Division's Director is specified in 44 V.S.A. section 9999. The Division is mandated to (explain mission, purpose, services).

The Division has two advisory boards which are funded from state General Funds, and which meet quarterly. Attachment A to this RFP is a copy of the statutory language. Attachment B presents a copy of the Division budget for fiscal year 1991.

### **SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUESTED**

The RFP should explain and clearly describe the scope of services to be provided. Be specific about terms of financial and/or program reviews, examinations, or services desired. Be clear about due dates. Include specifications for technical proposals.

Example: The management study will provide an independent judgment of the financial, administrative and marketing operations of the Division. The report, due on January 15, will identify areas of weaknesses and specific recommendations for improvements.

The selected consultant will review and consider the following:

1. Mission
2. Short and long term goals
3. Organization
4. Budget
5. Financing

The RFP should explain the nature of any assistance that will be available to the selected firm. Describe to what degree organization staff will be available to assist on the project. Also describe whether physical resources will be available.

Example: The division's personnel staff and accounting staff will be available to produce financial and personnel documents. Staff will undertake some research for consultant, but in-depth work must be done as part of the contract. Staff will be available for interviews by consultant. Consultants may use division office space and telephones for a period of two weeks.

The RFP should explain clearly and concisely the primary objective of the review. What is the expected outcome?

Example:

1. Opinion on financial statements
2. Evaluation of accounting systems
3. Evaluation of compliance with legislative mandate
4. Economy, efficiency and/or effectiveness of programs or operations.
5. Relative success of meeting goals and objectives.
6. Plans or recommendations for systems improvements.
7. Technical design.

**REPORT FORMAT**

If a report is to be the final product, the RFP should explain what should be in it. Specify to whom the report is to be addressed, and what form it should be in, including number of copies.

If you desire interim progress reports, preliminary final draft reports, or confidential draft copies of the report in advance of final publication, provide a time frame and dates.

**RESTRICTIONS AGAINST DISCLOSURE**

Sometimes agencies have legitimate needs to protect confidential information. The RFP can require contractors to maintain confidentiality, although the contract ultimately should duplicate this requirement.

Example: The Bidder agrees to keep the information related to the Division and all related agencies confidential. Other than the reports submitted to the Division, the Bidder agrees not to publish, reproduce, or otherwise divulge such information in whole or in part, in any manner of form or authorize or permit others to do so. Bidder will take reasonable measures as are necessary to restrict access to the information, while in the Bidder's possession, to those employees on his/her staff and the agency who must have the information on a "need-to-know" basis, and (s)he agrees to immediately notify, in writing, the Division's Authorized Representative in the event (s)he determines or has reason to suspect a breach of this requirement.

Conversely, bidders sometimes want to know how the state will treat their proprietary information. The RFP should state whether such information will be returned or retained by the agency.

**PROPOSAL FORMAT**

In order to simplify the review process and to obtain the maximum degree of comparability, agencies should require that proposals be organized in a manner specified in the RFP. The following outline suggests how a proposal can be organized to include all necessary information.

Example: The offerer must include in the proposal the following information:

1. A brief description of the firm which includes its history, organization structure and size.

2. An illustrative list of contracts for services performed by the firm within the past two years. A short narrative describing the nature and extent of each engagement should be provided. Please indicate those organizations which may be contacted by the Division as references.
3. A copy of the firm's last financial statement.
4. A statement and discussion of the Offerer's analysis of the RFP requirements. This should include:
  - a. A proposed scope of work with an explanation of technical approaches and a detailed outline of the proposed program for executing the objectives of the RFP.
  - b. A description of the number of direct hours of activity by each principal who will work on the project, broken out by major activity.
  - c. Statements and discussion of anticipated major difficulties and problem areas, together with potential or recommended approaches for their solution.
5. A description or rationale for the proposal, including:
  - a. An explanation as to why the intended approach submitted is better than any other approach which could be employed.
  - b. An explanation of why the number of direct hours proposed will be sufficient to the task.
  - c. A statement of the extent to which the proposed approach and program can be expected to meet or exceed requirements and specifications of the scope of work.
6. A work plan for the engagement including the appropriate starting and ending dates of specific activities, and the issuance date of any final report.
7. A statement of whether the contractor will be reimbursed on a time and material basis or on a fixed price basis. If time and material compensation is desired, the cost proposal should indicate the estimated maximum total cost with a breakout of:
  - a. Fees for staff time, showing the level of staff to be assigned, titles, hourly rates and estimated number of hours.
  - b. Travel expenses, including transportation costs, lodging, and subsistence.
  - c. Detailed analyses for all overhead and other costs.

Reimbursement for time and materials will be by voucher based upon the actual staff assigned at the rates provided and upon actual other costs incurred based upon documentation acceptable to the Division, subject to the maximum amount indicated.

8. Resumes with detailed qualifications and levels of competence of individuals to be assigned to the project. This should include the total number of such individuals at each level and the estimated hours to be spent by each.

### **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The RFP should explain evaluation criteria that will be used in selecting a contractor. A point scale presented in tabular format is often useful to the bidder.

Example: The Division will review the proposal and evaluate based on the following criteria:

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Maximum possible points</u>
A. Prior Experience:	
1. Completed work of similar type	5
2. Published results professionally	5
B. Organization Size and Structure of Offerer's firm. (Considering size in relation to work to be performed.)	5
C. Quality of staff and supervisors	
1. Qualifications of staff to be assigned	15
2. Supervision to be exercised over staff by firm's management. Education, position in firm, years and types of experience will be considered.	10
D. Offerer's understanding of work to be performed. This will be determined by the approach to the work and the time estimates to perform each activity.	
1. Quality of understanding of work	20
2. Adequate staff to meet deadlines	10
3. Realistic time estimates for each activity	10
E. Cost (Price = \$_____)	20
Maximum Points	100

Each proposal will be independently evaluated on Factors A through E by two or more qualified individuals. A composite score will be computed based on those independent evaluations.

### **QUESTIONS CONCERNING RFP**

The RFP should state where questions concerning its contents should be addressed:

Example: Questions concerning this request for proposal should be sent to  
John Doe  
Division of Prolix Bulletins  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602  
(802)828-9999